

# K-12 Evaluation

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## Mission

To provide feedback to parents, educators, and policymakers on the quality of educational services being provided to students, to provide research-based direction to state policymakers, and to provide clear directives to local school officials on the extent to which their efforts are increasing the academic achievement of Indiana students.

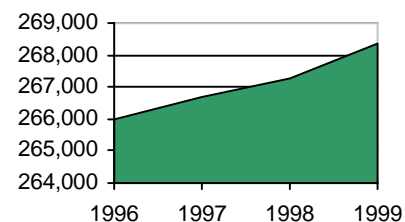
## Summary of Activities

The most prominent component of K-12 Evaluation is Indiana's large-scale assessment program, Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+). Administered by the **Department of Education (DOE)** and local schools, this evaluation provides the basis for program evaluation through the identification of strengths and weaknesses in meeting Indiana's academic standards. This identification occurs at the student, school, corporation, and state levels, and provides the basis for Indiana's Performance-Based Accreditation system. The 10th grade ISTEP test serves as a Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE), measuring a standard which students must meet in order to be eligible to receive a high school diploma.



During the current biennium, evaluation has focused policymakers' attention on the need for concise, jargon-free, world-class academic standards. The bipartisan, public/private Education Roundtable recommended new, more rigorous standards in English / language arts, mathematics, and science to the **State Board of Education** for adoption. The State Board of Education adopted new English standards in June 2000, new mathematics standards in September, and new science standards in November. Indiana's English / language arts, mathematics, and science standards have been given "A's" by the Fordham Foundation and rank 1st, 2nd, and 4th in the nation respectively in terms of rigor and quality.

**Number of Students Tested  
Through the State ISTEP+  
Program**



Evaluation funding is also provided for school improvement initiatives in high poverty school corporations where low student achievement exists. Over 65 training workshops and multiple onsite technical assistance programs have been provided to over 2,000 administrators and teachers across Indiana.

## External Factors

The demand for high standards and accountability has increased the use and scrutiny of large-scale assessment programs. High-stakes graduation tests increase the public profile of large-scale assessments such as ISTEP. At the national level, the increased demand for large-scale assessment programs has resulted in demand pushing supply limits. Test publishers struggle to supply and meet the increased demand for quality and timely evaluation programs. The DOE works to offer the most current and effective form of assessments for students, and recent action by the Indiana State Board of Education allows local schools to have more evaluation options at the local level for the administration of ISTEP+. These options have resulted in alternate large-scale assessments being designated by the Indiana State Board of Education to compare Indiana students to students in other states and the nation (National Education Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP)) and to students worldwide (Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)).

## Evaluation and Accomplishments

The Class of 2000, the first class of students required to meet the standard tested on the GQE, experienced a 32 percent recovery rate from the 54 percent passing in 1996 to 86 percent passing by the end of their senior year in 2000. The test gave educators specific information that identified students' strengths and weaknesses. In this way, weaknesses could be addressed and students could gain mastery of essential skills. Through evaluation, students, teachers, parents, and the business community can be assured of the value of an Indiana high school diploma. Well over 100,000 students have received additional instructional opportunities based upon the results of ISTEP+. Independent reviews of Indiana's

evaluation processes have been conducted by the International Center for Education Excellence (ICEE), Achieve, Inc., KPMG<sup>LLP</sup>, and Dr. Anthony Nitko, among the first such reviews of a large-scale assessment program in the world. Findings confirmed that Indiana's test measures what is taught (ICEE and Achieve, Inc.), test results are accurate and valid, and the GQE is used appropriately (KPMG and Dr. Nitko). As students, teachers, and parents become increasingly familiar with the more rigorous standards and students understand the importance of a productive high school education, the forecast looks even brighter. A RAND study released in July 2000 confirms these reviews. The report ranked Indiana among the top four states in the nation in gains made in math scores on the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) and recognized Indiana as improving in mathematics at twice the rate of the nation as a whole.



## Plans for the Biennium

Classroom instruction consistent with Indiana's new academic standards will begin immediately. Indiana's new academic standards for English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies will be distributed by grade-level to all parents and students at the beginning of each school year. Complete sets of the K-12 standards for each content area will be distributed to parents, educators and administrators.

Statewide assessment of the more rigorous language arts and mathematics standards will be phased-in for students in Grades 3, 6, and 8 beginning in 2002 and for Grade 10 in 2004. Assessment of the new science standards will begin in 2002 for students in Grade 5. New social studies standards are currently being written and scheduled for adoption in 2001. Assessment of social studies is scheduled to begin in 2003, and it is anticipated that testing will be phased-in for students in Grade 5. Item development for future assessments aligned to the new standards will continue in English/language arts and mathematics and will begin in 2001 for science and social studies. The adoption of new standards in the four content areas tested will require the alignment of curriculum (including textbook adoptions) and instruction. To provide teachers with support in their implementation of the new, more rigorous standards, curriculum frameworks will be developed and distributed. The frameworks will provide a blueprint for standards-based instruction, diagnostic materials, suggestions for classroom activities that foster skills needed to achieve the standards, lists of additional resources, etc.

